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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (SILSKI)
USDOC FOR BUREAU OF THE CENSUS: OFFICE OF AFRICA - NIGERIA DESK

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: CENSUS RESULTS NOT READY FOR PRIMETIME

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¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Nigerian census tabulations are nearly complete and the GON has said the figures will be unveiled in December. International monitors reported that donor contributions have facilitated a census process that was fairly transparent, open and covered a high percentage of the population. However, more than 80 Nigerian NGOs claimed that the conduct of the census was disorganized and inefficient. There remains speculation that the census will be subject to political machinations and will not be released until after the April 2007 elections. END SUMMARY.

Census Close to Ready?

¶12. (U) Recently, the National Population Council (NPC) held a "presidential forum for stakeholders on the status of the 2006 census." President Obasanjo, Vice President Abubakar, several ministers, high-level government officials and a sizeable media representation attended.

¶13. (U) The NPC reported that 90 international monitors from 23 countries served as independent sources of information on the census process and approximately 600 civil society organizations served as national monitors. The major findings of the international monitors' report were:

-- Census process was fairly transparent.
-- There was high geographic area and population coverage, up to 95-98% for several states.
-- The NPC was open to media and civil society monitors working to increase census credibility.

The report recommended raw data collected should be carefully cleaned and validated using international standards.

Nigerian NGOs Cry Foul

¶14. (SBU) The Civil Society Coalition on Census Monitoring (CSCCM), a collective effort of 80 NGOs to monitor the census compiled a report that concluded that the census was disorganized and inefficient. CSCCM representatives told us that its monitors documented a general nationwide problem with a lack of materials and or staff at many locations. Moreover, many people were discouraged from waiting in long lines, while others could not find people to document them, and others, hoping to game the system, registered in multiple places. CSCCM underscored that many people were not counted, and overall,

the 2006 census did not inspire a sufficient level of technical or political confidence to call it successful.

Census Financial Contributions

15. (U) The NPC reported that 37.8 billion Naira (\$290 million) was allocated for the census with 18.5 billion Naira coming from the GON, 17 billion Naira from the EU and smaller amounts from other international donors. The state governments contributed approximately 520 million Naira in cash and in kind, while local government councils provided fuel and other logistical support.

Census Ballot Scanning and Editing

16. (U) So far at the seven data processing centers - Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kaduna, Yola, and Kano - 99% of the local government areas (LGAs) have had their ballots scanned, and 89% of the LGAs have had their ballots edited. Editing for the last LGA was expected to be completed by October 20. NPC officials noted that it will take at least 8-10 weeks for data extraction, tabulation and validation before the initial results will be unveiled.

Post Enumeration Survey (PES)

17. (U) In addition to the census, a PES was conducted June 18-26 taking a five percent representative sample drawn from all 774 LGAs. Initial findings from the EU and NPC monitoring teams suggest the PES was satisfactorily completed and should help validate the census results. The NPC expects the PES results to be complete in early

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December.

Comment

18. (SBU) Assuming the best case scenario, the NPC plans to release the census in late December. This date is unrealistic based on past government practices during the holidays when GON offices typically close up during the holiday period or greatly reduce their workloads. More likely mid-January would be a realistic time period for release of the census.

19. (SBU) Another issue is that despite President Obasanjo's assurances that the census will be transparent and fair, there are serious reservations among some observers of whether the census will be unveiled before the April 2007 elections. These observers speculate that it does not serve the President's interest to have census results unveiled before the elections. If census results are released, the data is likely to be inconsistent with voter registration information and lead to outcries from communities that are undercounted.

CAMPBELL